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A Study of Food Patterns and Meal Consumption

Better Homes and Gardens®

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Introduction

Pinpointing trends in food preparation or usage and supermarket shopping habits is critical for the Food Marketing Institute and Better Homes and Gardens® magazine in staying on target with the needs of America's consumers. With a goal of tracking these trends over five years, in 1987 the Food Marketing Institute and Better Homes and Gardens commissioned a study covering these areas:

- Food patterns and meal consumption.
- Time and convenience.
- Nutrition.
- Information sources, planning and purchasing.

This summary on food patterns and meal consumption contains the results of the survey among "involved" food preparers and households except when referring to Table 1. Only "involved" food preparers and households are documented, because they represent the vast majority of reporting households (757 from a total of 862) and because the most interesting information come from these.

The definition of involvement follows:

- **Involved Food Preparers:** Those male and female heads of household who reported preparing an evening meal in the household at least once a month or preparing part of an evening meal — a main dish, side dish, or dessert — at least once a week.
- **Involved Households:** Those households in which the interviewed head of household reported preparing an evening meal in the household at least once a month or part of an evening meal — a main dish, side dish, or dessert — at least once a week.

Additional summaries from this study covering 1) time and convenience, 2) nutrition and 3) information sources, planning and purchasing are available. Supermarket personnel may obtain these from the Food Marketing Institute and manufacturers from Better Homes and Gardens magazine.

Special Notes

All charts except Chart 1 are based on the 757 "involved" food preparers/households or a subsample noted after the specific question. Chart 1 represents the results of the screening question that determined which households were "involved" and which were "uninvolved." "Involved" food preparers and "involved" households are used interchangeably. The percentages shown in each table are calculated on the base number noted. These percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding or multiple response.

In the text, when percentages are noted for a respondent, it is assumed that the survey participant is speaking for his or her household only. Percentages with the percent sign running down are to be read across; those with the percent sign running across are to be read down.

For more specific information on the study and sampling tolerances, the methodology is found at the end of this summary.

While care has been taken to summarize study results completely, specific charts and applicable demographic groups have been selected to show the important points in the study.

Highlights on Food Patterns and Meal Consumption*

Women remain the primary food preparers, but male participation is substantial and growing.

While 96% of females say they're the main cooks, 47% of male respondents also claim that role. In addition, 35% of the men polled say they're cooking more often than five years ago.

The presence of children creates a climate for cooking.

Eighty-one percent with children (compared to 67% without) say household members eat dinner together three or more times a week, and 30% of those who have children (versus 23% without) are cooking more now than five years ago. Of those cooking more, 28% of females claim that new children in the family have spurred the cooking increase.

Cooking is a pleasurable pursuit.

Sixty-three percent of survey respondents consider cooking a joy, and cooking enjoyment is growing among men. Fourteen percent of the men cooking more often than five years ago say they do so because they now have more interest in cooking.

Dinner remains both a frequent cooking occasion and an important American institution.

Seven of ten respondents say household members eat dinner together three or more times a week and eight of ten say they cook an evening meal several times a week or more. Importantly, these high percentages remain constant among mid-age (25-44) and family-oriented respondents.

Cooking shortcuts ease the cooking load.

Thirty-seven percent of respondents are defrosting/heating frozen foods in a microwave oven three or more times a week. Fifty-four percent are cooking on a barbecue grill, 41% bring home a complete cooked meal and 32% say someone other than the usual cook prepares the household's meals a couple of times a month or more. Shortcuts are especially popular among the 25-44 year olds, those with children and working females.

* All percentages are based on "involved" households.

Food Preparation Responsibility and Frequency

- *Women are the primary food preparers, but men make up a respectable and, most importantly, growing share.*
- *Most food preparers cook an evening meal several times a week or more.*
- *Cooking incidence is higher among those 45 and older but the growth is among the 25-44 year olds.*
- *Children create a climate not only for cooking but also for increased meal preparation.*
- *Working women may cook less than nonworking counterparts, but growth is among the workers.*

(Seven out of eight U.S. households are involved in food preparation.) While virtually all of the "involved" women polled (96%) consider themselves to be the primary person responsible for cooking meals, about half (47%) of males in "involved" households see themselves as the main person who cooks.* Cooking frequency is substantial. Eight of ten food preparers (81%) cook an evening meal several times a week or more. Half do so nearly every day (51%) and three in ten prepare the evening meal several times a week. An additional one in ten (11%) cooks an evening meal once a week.

* All data in the rest of the summary are based on "involved" households.

The study confirms that women continue to be the food preparers cooking most frequently, but men represent an important and growing segment. While about double the percentage of women (63%) versus men cook an evening meal nearly every day, three in ten (29%) men are bearing that responsibility. Not only that, but consider that while only 20% of females admit to cooking more than five years ago, that's true of 35% of the men.

Age, presence of children, and work habits also must be factored into the equation:

- Survey participants ages 25-44 are less likely to cook an evening meal every day (45%) than those 45 or more (58%), but their cooking frequency is increasing. (Thirty-five percent of the 25-44's report cooking more than five years ago versus 11% for the 45 + group.)
- Fifty-two percent of food preparers with children versus 50% without children cook an evening meal nearly every day. Survey participants in homes with children also are cooking more often than those without children (30% versus 23% respectively).
- Nonworking females (75%) are more likely to cook the evening meal nearly every day than females who work (53%). However, 24% of working women say they're cooking more, while only 16% of nonworking women are doing so.

TABLE 1

"Are you the main person in your household who cooks meals for the household, or is someone else?"

	Total Households	Total Males	Total Females	Involved Households Total	Involved Households Males	Involved Households Females	Uninvolved Households Total	Uninvolved Households Males
Respondent is main person	72%	41%	95%	78%	47%	96%	31%	21%
Someone else is	26	56	4	20	51	2	65	75
Other	2	3	2	2	2	2	4	4
(Base)	(862)	(339)	(523)	(757)	(253)	(504)	(105)	(86)

TABLE 2

"How often would you say you, yourself, cook an evening meal for your household: nearly every day; several times a week; once a week; one or two times a month; less than once a month; or not at all?"

		Involved Food Preparers					
	(Base)	Nearly Every Day	Several Times a Week	Once a Week	One or Two Times a Month	Less than Once a Month	Not at All
Total Involved	(757)	51%	30	11	6	1	2
Involved Males	(253)	29%	35	16	15	2	3
Involved Females	(504)	63%	27	8	*	0	1
Age							
25-44	(375)	45%	32	13	7	1	1
45 or more	(325)	58%	26	9	4	*	3
Children							
Children in household	(325)	52%	27	9	9	2	2
No children in household	(432)	50%	31	12	4	0	1
Work (Females)							
Work	(295)	53%	35	11	1	0	*
Do not work	(206)	75%	17	5	0	0	2

Less than 1%

TABLE 3

"Compared with five years ago, do you yourself cook more often, less often, or about the same?"

		Involved Food Preparers			
	(Base)	More Often	Less Often	About the Same	Don't Know/ No Opinion
Total Involved	(757)	25%	28	47	0
Involved Males	(253)	35%	16	49	0
Involved Females	(504)	20%	35	46	0
Age					
25-44	(375)	35%	25	41	0
45 or more	(325)	11%	33	56	0
Children					
Children in household	(325)	30%	23	47	0
No children in household	(432)	23%	30	47	0
Work (Females)					
Work	(295)	24%	40	36	0
Do not work	(206)	16%	29	56	0

*Less than 1%.

Alterations in Cooking Patterns and Cooking Equipment

- *Alterations in household size and composition account for many changes in cooking frequency.*
- *When a female spouse goes to work it spurs male cooking activity.*
- *Males stand out as the sex with a growing interest in cooking.*
- *Both sexes enjoy cooking, and the luster is dimmed only a bit among working women and households with children.*

Predictably, adding or subtracting children, getting married/living with someone or a move to living alone creates the right climate for a change in cooking habits. Cooking by *women* is most altered by the presence of children. Given that when children come into the family women cook more often (28%) than five years ago, it follows that when children leave home women cook less often (35%). A secondary reason for *women* to cook *more* is cohabitation; 24% got married or are living with someone. (But it's the same reason that 22% of *men* give for cooking *less*.)

It would seem the reverse should be true. Seventeen percent of men do cook more because they're now living by themselves. Yet 11% of *women* also cook *more* as a result of beginning to live singly, indicating that in some cases women may miss a man's cooking contributions or miss someone for whom to cook. Some men evidently will shoulder part of the cooking load when a wife/partner enters the work force. Fourteen percent admit to cooking more for that reason.

Surprisingly, the *increased interest* in cooking is found almost totally among men (14% say increased interest is the reason for cooking more often versus 1% for females), but this may simply reflect the fact that women are already very interested in cooking.

Cooking is a joy for survey participants (63% agree). While nonworking women and those households without children echo this sentiment (64% and 65% enjoy respectively), working females and respondents with children are a bit more ambivalent. Only 58% of each group enjoy cooking, and a higher percentage consider it a chore (31% and 32% respectively) than nonworking/childless respondents.

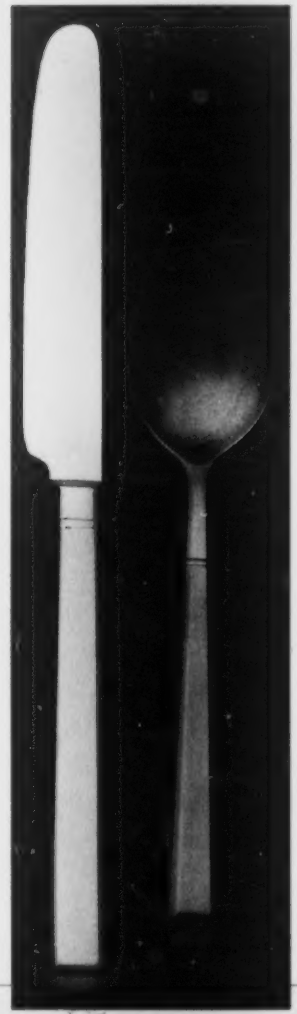


TABLE 4

"What are the main reasons for this change?"

(Base = Those who cook more often or less often compared with five years ago.)

	Those Who Cook More Often			Those Who Cook Less Often		
	Total Involved	Involved Males	Involved Females	Total Involved	Involved Males	Involved Females
New children in family (those who cook more)/ Children left home (those who cook less)	16%	5%	28%	28%	5%	35%
Married/started living with someone	15	6	24	7	22	3
Now living by myself	14	17	11	6	2	8
Have more interest in cooking	8	14	1	(Does not apply)		
Spouse/partner went to work	7	14	0	(Not mentioned)		
(Base)	(198)	(90)	(108)	(216)	(43)	(173)

(Multiple response accepted)
(Main mentions)

TABLE 5

"In general, would you say you enjoy cooking, or do you think of it as just a necessary chore?"

				Involved Food Preparers			
	Total Involved	Involved Males	Involved Females	Working Females	Nonworking Females	Children in Household	No Children in Household
Enjoy	63%	65%	62%	58%	64%	58%	65%
Chore	27	25	29	31	28	32	25
Both	9	9	9	10	7	10	8
Neither	1	1	*	1	0	*	1
Don't know/ No opinion	*	1	*	*	*	*	1
(Base)	(757)	(253)	(504)	(295)	(206)	(325)	(432)

* Less than ½%.

Cooking Methods

- *Microwaving and barbecuing are popular and growing ways of cooking.*
- *In general microwave use is more pronounced among the 25-44 age group and those with children; the greatest growth also is by these groups and among working women.*
- *The 25-44 year olds, respondents with children and working females are by far more likely to barbecue and also are the growing segment.*
- *Across the board, growth in usage of the various cooking methods is more pronounced among 25-44 year olds, those with children and working females than their older, childless and nonworking counterparts.*

Defrosting/heating frozen foods in a microwave is engaged in almost on a daily basis by 37% of survey participants. More 25-44 year olds (40%) and respondents with children (41%) cook this way and do so more often than do their older (33%) and/or childless (36%) counterparts. Working women represent a growing segment in this area also. Of those who are defrosting/heating in a microwave *more often*, 34% are female workers versus only 23% for nonworking females. The figures for "cooking fresh vegetables in a microwave" seem to nearly reverse the trends noted above. The data are deceiving, however, because *fresh vegetable usage* is generally higher among older respondents, those without children and nonworking females.*

Barbecuing, stir frying, using a food processor and cooking meat, poultry or fish are accomplished less often but are no less interesting. The dramatic differences are in barbecuing. While 54% of total respondents barbecue a couple times a month or more, 25-44 year olds (69%), those with children (72%) and working females (59%) are far more likely to barbecue than those in reversed circumstances. The mid-age group, those with children and working women also are far more likely to say barbecuing is done *more* often now (23% versus 5%, 21% versus 12% and 21% versus 9% respectively). Of special note also is that men are seemingly the trendsetters for cooking meat, poultry or fish in a microwave oven (32% do so a couple times a month or more compared with 19% for females).

The most significant point may be that use of most methods of food preparation and cooking is more pronounced in the 25-44 year old group, those respondents with children and working females. In *every* case these groups are more likely to use the cooking methods listed "more often" than are those 45 and over, with no children or with a nonworking female. (This is true even in the case of "cooking fresh vegetables" in a microwave, even though the last named groups are bigger users of fresh vegetables in general.)

*The question of fresh vegetable usage is covered in the survey booklet on nutrition.

TABLE 6

*"I'd like to ask about use of various **cooking methods.** I'd like to know how often you use these methods in your household using the same answer categories you wrote down, and then whether it is more often or less often than a year or two ago. With (ITEM), how often does this occur in your household?"*

(Base = Those who are involved with cooking and meal preparation.)

Nearly Every Day, Three or Four Times a Week

	Total	Males	Females	25-44	45 - Over	Children in Household	No Children in Household	Working Females	Nonworking Females
Defrosting and/ or heating frozen foods in a micro-wave oven	37%	37%	38%	40%	33%	41%	36%	38%	38%
Cooking fresh vegetables in a micro-wave oven	19	14	22	19	20	21	18	19	26

Nearly Every Day, Three or Four Times a Week, Once or Twice a Week, A Couple Times a Month

Cooking on a barbecue grill	54	57	51	69	39	72	44	59	44
Stir-frying in a wok or skillet	42	42	42	42	41	41	42	38	48
Using a food processor	30	31	30	30	32	32	29	28	33
Cooking meat, poultry or fish in a microwave oven	24	32	19	27	22	28	23	21	19
(Base)	(757)	(253)	(504)	(375)	(325)	(325)	(432)	(295)	(206)

TABLE 7

*"Is that **more often, less often,** or **about the same** as, say, a year or two ago?"*

(Base = Those who are involved with cooking and meal preparation and the following cooking method is used in household.)

	Total	Males	Females	25-44	45 - Over	Children in Household	No Children in Household	Working Females	Nonworking Females
% Say more often:									
Defrosting and/or heating frozen foods in a microwave oven	30%	33%	29%	37%	23%	35%	28%	34%	23%
Cooking fresh vegetables in a microwave oven	18	19	18	23	14	23	16	21	14
Cooking on a barbecue grill	15	14	15	23	5	21	12	21	9
Cooking meat, poultry or fish in a microwave oven	14	17	11	19	9	17	12	14	9
Stir-frying in a wok or skillet	14	10	16	17	11	16	13	17	16
Using a food processor	13	13	12	15	10	13	12	15	10
(Base range)	(747-757)	(249-253)	(498-504)	(372-375)	(318-325)	(323-325)	(424-432)	(292-295)	(203-206)

Meal Consumption Habits

- *The greater majority say household members eat dinner together regularly.*
- *Not surprisingly, lunch is the meal most often eaten away from home.*
- *Convenience options (such as bringing home fully cooked food or having it delivered) are employed, especially among the mid-age group, those with children and working women.*
- *Over half prepare and freeze a main dish for later use a couple times a month or more.*
- *Sharing the cooking role is most popular among the mid-age group and those with children.*
- *Six of ten try a new recipe a couple times a month or more.*

Respondents exhibit an interesting mix of new and traditional eating patterns. Despite suggestions to the contrary, the sanctity of the dinner hour seems fairly secure, especially for those with children. Seventy-one percent of survey participants eat dinner together nearly every day or three or four times a week. (Eighty-one percent with children, versus 67% without, do so.) Important here too is that there's little erosion in the younger age group (75% of 25-44 year olds eat dinner together versus 70% of the 45 and overs).

The real story, however, may be the fact that family meals are being preserved by using occasional convenience options. Especially interesting is the practice of bringing home or having delivered already prepared food. Forty-one percent of total respondents bring home a *complete* meal, 36% *part* of a meal and 27% have a meal *ordered* and *delivered* a couple times a month or more. In all cases, usage of the methods by mid-age survey participants, those with children and working women is *significantly higher* than the total, while those in opposite circumstances show the reverse.

When it comes to eating outside the home, it's predictable that those whose lives might require them to eat away from home do so. For example, in a world where many people work, it's not surprising that 62% of the total eat lunch and 17% eat breakfast outside the home three or more times a week. It also follows that the 25-44 year olds, those with children and working women show even higher percentages for these activities and time periods, than those in opposite circumstances, because again someone is likely to be in the work force. Restaurant eating shows a similar pattern. As would be logical, the 25-44 age group and working women are more likely to eat at restaurants than those older and nonworking.

- Twenty percent of those 25-44 versus 17% that are 45 and over eat out at a restaurant three or more times a week.
- Twenty-two percent of working females versus 15% for nonworking females do the same.

Interesting too is the usage of two other convenience options: 1) preparing and freezing one or more main dishes for later use and 2) having the cooking done by someone other than the usual cook. While 52% of total survey participants freeze ahead meals a couple times a month or more, that's true of 46% of those with children and working women, indicating that time may be the limiting factor here. Sharing of cooking roles, on the other hand, is evidently an especially viable means to spread the cooking for adults with children and the mid-age group. For example, while 32% of total households say someone other than the usual person cooks a couple times a month or more, that's true of 39% of 25-44 year olds and 38% of those with children. The only surprise is among working women. They are slightly less likely than the total to shift the cooking load to another person a couple times a month or more (32% for total compared with 31% for

working women) but still move that cooking chore to someone else more often than nonworking women (23%).

Last but not least is the question of how often adults are trying a new recipe from a cookbook, magazine or other recipe source. The story is among households with children. For example, while six of ten adults (57%) try a recipe a couple times a month or more, that's true of 67% of adults with children but only 52% of respondents without children.

TABLE 8

*"I'm going to mention a number of things that have to do with **cooking and eating meals**. Would you please tell me how often each item or event occurs in your household. Beginning with (ITEM), how often does this occur in your household?"*
(Base = Those who are involved with cooking and meal preparation.)

Nearly Every Day, Three or Four Times a Week/Once or Twice a Week, A Couple Times a Month

	Total Households	25-44	45 & Over	Children in Household	No Children in Household	Working Females	Nonworking Females
All household members eat dinner together	71%/12%	75%/13%	70%/11%	81%/12%	67%/13%	71%/12%	79%/7%
One or more household members eat **lunch** outside the home	62/20	77/15	48/25	81/14	53/24	77/16	43/25
One or more household members eat out at a restaurant	19/58	20/61	17/55	17/61	20/57	22/59	15/56
One or more household members eat **breakfast** outside	17/19	23/19	13/18	24/15	14/21	20/16	13/17
One or more main dishes are prepared and frozen for use later	9/43	9/40	9/46	8/38	9/46	7/39	6/46
Someone other than the person who usually prepares the household's meals prepares a complete meal for the family	5/27	6/33	5/20	5/33	5/24	3/28	3/20
Someone brings home a **complete** meal that is cooked outside the home	4/37	5/49	1/26	3/49	5/30	3/42	2/28
A new recipe from a cookbook, magazine or other source of recipes is tried	4/53	4/58	3/50	6/61	3/49	2/60	5/54
Someone brings home **part** of a meal that is cooked outside the home	3/33	3/42	3/25	1/41	4/29	3/41	1/23
A meal that is cooked outside the home is **ordered and delivered**	1/26	1/38	*/13	1/37	1/20	1/28	0/15
(Base)	(757)	(375)	(325)	(325)	(432)	(295)	(206)

*Less than 1%

Methodology

The data for this survey were collected from 862 telephone interviews conducted in September and October 1987 by Opinion Research Corporation. Households contacted for the survey were selected by using ORC's Random Digit Dialing (RDD) system to create a random sample of U.S. telephone households that closely approximates the total U.S. population. However, a statistical weighting procedure also was employed when the data were tabulated to bring the survey results into balance with actual universe proportions. The RDD system excludes commercial numbers and includes unlisted and new telephone numbers as well as listed numbers.

Each household was screened by the following two criteria:

1) male or female head of household
2) degree of involvement in cooking all or part of an evening meal

Heads of household who cooked all of an evening meal at least once a month, as well as those preparing part of that meal at least once a week, were considered to be "involved" food preparers living in "involved" households. Those preparing all or part of an evening meal less often than that were considered to be "uninvolved" food preparers living in "uninvolved" households. Since the vast majority were "involved" households and because "involved" respondents offer the most valuable information on food use and shopping patterns, the information in this summary has been limited only to these households.

Demographic Profile of Involved Food Preparers: 1987

	Number in Sample	Percentage
Total Involved Food Preparers	757	100%
Sex		
Men	253	37
Women	504	63
Working	295	54
Nonworking	206	44

	Total	Males	Females
Marital Status			
Married	61%	60%	61%
Single, widowed, divorced, separated	40	40	38
Spouse Works	72%	64%	76%
Age			
Under 25	6%	8%	5%
25-34	23	29	20
35-44	21	22	20
45-54	15	12	17
55-64	15	14	16
65-74	13	12	13
75 and over	7	3	9
Average Age	47 years	43 years	48 years
Education			
High school or less	47%	40%	52%
Some college/college grad.	42	47	39
Post graduate	10	13	8
Household Size			
One	24%	23%	25%
Two	33	35	32
Three	18	18	18
Four or more	25	24	25
Average Household Size	2.6	2.6	2.6
Type of Household			
With children	32%	32%	33%
Without children	66	68	66
Home Ownership			
Own home	67%	61%	71%
Rent home	33	39	29

	Total	Males	Females
Income			
Less than $20,000	32%	27%	35%
$20,000 - $39,000	33	36	32
$40,000 - $74,000	19	22	18
$75,000 or more	5	8	3
Average Income	$30,900	$35,300	$28,200
Race			
White	88%	86%	89%
Black	10	11	9
Oriental/Asian/ Pacific Indian	*	*	*
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	1	1	1
Other	2	2	1
Region			
Northeast	23%	23%	23%
North Central	25	26	25
South	34	33	34
West	17	18	17

Northeast includes Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and West Virginia.

North Central includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

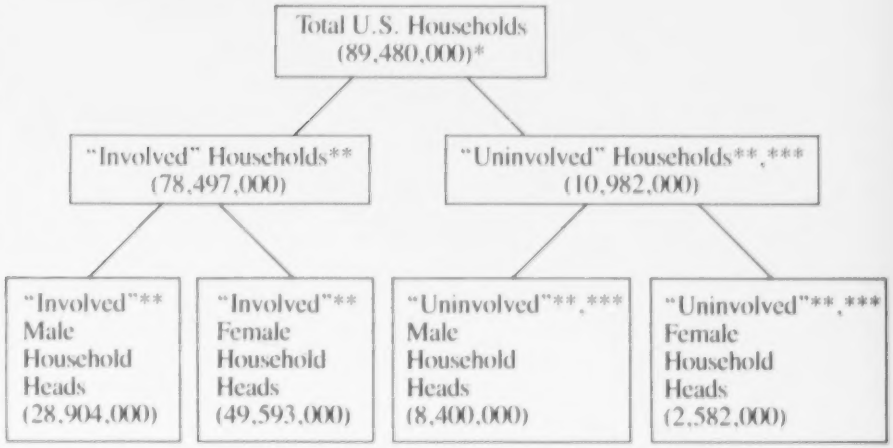
South includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

West includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

*Less than ½%.

Projectability

Because it was important that the research data be projectable to the U.S. population, the following chart illustrates the size of the universe of U.S. households* and its composition in terms of the household subgroups that were surveyed**:


Total U.S. Households (89,480,000)*
"Involved" Households** (78,497,000)
"Uninvolved" Households**,*** (10,982,000)
"Involved"** Male Household Heads (28,904,000)
"Involved"** Female Household Heads (49,593,000)
"Uninvolved"**,*** Male Household Heads (8,400,000)
"Uninvolved"**,*** Female Household Heads (2,582,000)

*Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 411, **Households and Family Characteristics: March 1987,** U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1987 (Issued September 1987).

**For each of these subgroups the estimates are based on the level of incidence obtained during the interviewing process.

***It is important to note that these sub-universe estimates may overstate the true number of households in which *both* household heads are "uninvolved" food preparers. This is due to the fact that the operational definition of an "uninvolved" household used in this study is based on information about the interviewed head of household and does not directly take into account information about the other household head's level of involvement in food preparation.

Sampling Variation

With any study the results are subject to sampling variation, i.e., the difference between survey results and those that would be gathered by studying the entire population. In general, sampling variation is less when the size of the sample is large and the sample result approaches 0% or 100%, rather than being in a middle range. The following table shows the approximate range of sampling variation for involved males and females, two major groups described in this study. For example, in Table 2, 29% of involved males say they cook an evening meal nearly every day. This percentage is based on the sample of about 250 involved males. The table below shows that the sample variation for a 30% response at that base is plus or minus 6%.

Sampling Tolerances (+/−) at 95% Confidence Level for Involved Males and Females

Sample Size	Type of Group	Approximate Sampling Tolerances 10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
500	"Involved" Females	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%
250	"Involved" Males	4%	5%	6%	6%	6%

Applying the sampling variation to the 29% response, the true proportion of involved males who say they cook more often should be no less than 23% nor more than 35%.

In addition to the sampling variation that can be figured for a single piece of data, it's also helpful to determine whether the differences *between* certain percentages are real or the result of sampling variation. Looking at Table 2 again, while 29% of "involved" males say they cook more often, the same is true of 63% of "involved" females. The "involved" male data is based on 253 responses and involved females on 504 responses. The sampling tolerance is 7% and since there's a 34% differential between the two male/female percentages, the 7% is statistically significant.

Sampling Tolerances Levels (at 95% Confidence Level) To Use in Evaluating Differences Between Two Percentage Results

Sample Comparison	Approximate Sampling Tolerances 10% or 90%	20% or 80%	30% or 70%	40% or 60%	50%
Various Key Subgroup Comparisons					
757 vs. 504	3%	5%	5%	6%	6%
253	4%	6%	7%	7%	7%
504 vs. 253	5%	6%	7%	7%	8%